

## COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

September 12, 2006

The meeting of the Maryland Commission on Human Relations was called to order on Tuesday, September 12, 2006 at 10:05 a.m., in Baltimore, Maryland.

**Present** Thomas Owen, Rabbi Elan Adler, Sambhu Banik and Norman Gelman

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES** The minutes of the July meeting were accepted as written.

**CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT** Commissioners received copies of the Chairperson's Report (See attached).

Chairperson Owen informed Commissioners that Dr. Banik invited a friend, Professor Sitangon Ghosh, visiting from England, to attend the meeting today. On behalf of the Commission and Commissioners Chairperson Owen welcomed Professor Ghosh.

Coalition Opposed to Violence and Extremism (COVE) Chairperson Owen informed Commissioners that sometime ago Commissioner Gelman requested that MCHR hear from someone who had been dealing with hate crimes. Members of COVE were invited to attend a Commission meeting. Two members, Robert Barnes and Gary Monroe, are here for the meeting. The agency has been a member of COVE since its beginning. Mr. Barnes discussed the background, mission and responsibilities of COVE. Mr. Barnes discussed some incidents of violence that have occurred and how COVE reacted to those incidents.

COVE is made up of several Human Rights/Relations agencies, as well as other organizations. Each year COVE sponsors Human Rights Day in Annapolis. It is a very well attended event. Mr. Barnes stated that Human Rights Day will be in February and urged Commissioners to attend.

Mr. Barnes informed Commissioners that the Southern Poverty Law Center collects data nationally related to hate crimes. This group tracts hate bias

incidents all over the country. They have filed suits, in various parts of the country, against different organizations that have either killed or severely maimed someone. When the jury finds these organizations guilty they insist that the organization disband, get out of the state where the incident occurred, and turn over its property and resources to the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Mr. Barnes also informed Commissioners that Mr. James Skidmore, from the Baltimore County Police Department, has developed an outstanding response to hate crimes. Mr. Monroe informed Commissioners that Baltimore county has the highest reporting of any hate bias incidents out of all the law enforcement agencies in the State of Maryland. All the hate related incidents in Maryland are reported to the Maryland State Police who send copies of the reports to MCHR. All of the counties in the state do not report hate related incidents. Mr. Monroe also stated that a lot of the schools in the State do not report hate related incidents.

Mr. Barnes stated that one thing Commissioners can do to help COVE is to educate themselves about hate bias incidents. Another thing Commissioners can do is to become part of the Southern Poverty Law Center. Mr. Barnes also stated that Commissioners should be visible and public when it comes to these incidents of hate and violence. Police Officers from all of the counties in Maryland used to attend COVE meetings; their participation is not what it used to be. Commissioners should urge their Police Chiefs to send police officers to COVE meetings.

Commissioner Gelman would like hate crime incidents reported during the monthly Commission meetings.

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

### **Commissioner Training**

Commissioners received copies of the Executive Director's Report (See attached).

The Executive Director informed Commissioners that the Maryland Association of Human Rights Agencies and the National Association of Human Rights Workers will be sponsoring Commissioners' training on September 28, 2006, at the Howard County Government Gateway Building in Columbia, Maryland. The training is free.

The Executive Director also informed Commissioners that the Baltimore Community Relations Commission will be sponsoring their Annual Breakfast Meeting and the Keynote Speaker is Clarence Page. The breakfast will be held on Friday, September 22, 2006 at 8 a.m., at the Wyndham Inner Harbor Hotel.

### **FY 2008 Budget**

The Executive Director informed Commissioners that MCHR prepares its 2008 Budget in August. The Executive Director previously reported that MCHR's 2008 Budget has not been cut at this point. Commissioners have also been warned that MCHR's federal funding has been slowly diminishing. MCHR has

come to the conclusion that it cannot continue to spend at the same level in federal funds that it has in the past. MCHR has to present to Budget & Management a responsible budget that more accurately reflects what the agency's federal funding is going to be, during the 2008 fiscal year. MCHR has had to propose some budget cuts on positions that are federally funded in the budget, to come down to the realistic figure that needs to be submitted for the budget.

MCHR can also submit the over-the-mark request. MCHR has asked the state to pick-up some of the slack that has been generated by the cut in federal funding.

#### Senate Bill 897 - Commercial Non- Discrimination Bill

The Commercial Non-Discrimination bill was passed in the last session of the General Assembly. This bill gives MCHR new authority over a new field of complaints as of October 1, 2006. MCHR, by law, will be required to take complaints from commercial vendors who feel they have been discriminated against by contractors. MCHR is not sure how many complaints it will get. MCHR does not have the staff or the legal expertise to take on this new obligation. MCHR has asked Budget & Management for two (2) positions for this fiscal year, to try to get MCHR ready to enforce this bill. MCHR has also requested other positions in the over-the-mark request for 2008. The other positions are attorney positions, as well as investigators to staff a unit that would be lead by one of the attorneys, that would investigate the commercial vendor complaints.

The two items listed above are the items placed in the agency's Over-the-Mark request and to also restore cuts that have to be made as a result of MCHR's lost of several hundred thousand dollars in federal funds.

Commissioner Gelman motioned that the Commission send a letter, from the Chairperson and the Executive Director, to all the sponsors of Senate Bill 897. Chairperson Owen stated that Commissioners write letters and/or call legislators to make a plea on behalf of the Commission.

#### FY 2007 Budget

MCHR is hopeful that it will get through this fiscal year with the federal funds that we have.

#### Draft Audit Report

Commissioners received a copy of the draft of the final report of the audit from the Department of Legislative Services (See attached). The Executive Director informed Commissioners that no issues were reported and that MCHR should receive a final report. The Executive Director offered his appreciation to the Assistant Director and the fiscal staff. Chairperson Owen also thanked the Assistant Director.

#### Hispanic Study

Commissioner Gelman informed Commissioners that Dr. Schneider continues to try to acquire funds for the study. Dr. Hanson, from George Washington University, who was the manager of the study, has resigned.

**DEPUTY  
DIRECTOR'S  
REPORT**

Commissioners received copies of the Deputy Director's Report (See attached). The Deputy Director informed Commissioners that MCHR is on track with its contracts.

EEOC Contract

MCHR received an upward modification on the EEOC contract by one hundred cases.

**ASSISTANT  
DIRECTOR'S  
REPORT**

The Assistant Director informed Commissioners that the monthly budget report is not available this month. Commissioners will receive the report next month.

Information  
Technology  
Annual Report

The Information Technology Manager informed Commissioners that they will receive a rough draft of the Annual Report next month. The Annual Report is projected to go to the printer during the beginning of December.

**GENERAL  
COUNSEL'S  
REPORT**

Commissioners received copies of the General Counsel's Report (See attached).

Equal Pay Commission

The General Counsel informed Commissioners that the Equal Pay Commission is finishing up its work. A final report will be available on September 30, 2006.

Regulations

The General Counsel attended training regarding drafting of regulations. Drafting regulations on-line makes it easier.

Legislation

The General Counsel informed Commissioners that drafts will have to be prepared to amend Senate Bill 897 – Commercial Non-Discrimination Policy.

Departmental legislation was due in August; MCHR did not submit any recommendations.

The General Counsel informed Commissioners that there is a committee, headed by Delegate Rosenberg, to again draft a bill to deal with creating a private right of action and enhancing remedies in the employment discrimination section of MCHR's statute.

Commissioner  
Membership

Chairperson Owen informed Commissioners that if they know of anyone who would like to serve on the Commission to please let him know.

The Commission meeting was adjourned at 12:15 p.m.

Barbara Wilson